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# AFGHANISTAN

## CASE STUDY

# Out of the Home, Into the Economy

### Women in Paktya Province improve their social status by learning vocational skills



Photo: USAID/ASGP

*Women will soon be able to save money – and perhaps also generate income – for their families by sewing clothes for themselves and others.*

**CHALLENGE** Shagai Village, located in a remote district of Paktya Province, has had few development efforts because of the rampant insecurity in the province. Typically, women only leave their homes to gather during weddings and funerals. Social and economic development activities for women are alien in Shagai. Poverty cuts to the bone.

**INITIATIVE** Mahira, a community activist, was present at a USAID introductory meeting in Gardez City. Eagerly she returned to her village with news of a new initiative that could significantly benefit the women of her community. After much consultation with the women's council and village elders, community leaders acknowledged that women in Shagai deserve support. The Women's Organization of Shagai called together many women from the community to determine what type of activity would most benefit them and their families. The organization prepared a grant application for funds to purchase sewing machines, cloth, and furniture, and pay for a trainer to provide tangible skills to the new participants. USAID approved the grant and the women immediately began turning their ideas into action.

**RESULTS** The grant enabled the association to launch a tailoring training and literacy activity for 30 women. Tailoring skills are helping the participants' families save money for other priorities – such as healthcare and education – by enabling them to sew clothes for their families. Participants also established a women's tailoring shop where they work for a few hours each day and receive orders to make dresses for other women in the village. Children often accompany their mothers to the training facility where they learn basic literacy and numeracy, while their mothers participate in tailoring training in a separate classroom. The initiative is making a significant impact in village families. Through USAID, the women of Shagai are contributing to their families' welfare, gaining vocational skills and education, and building confidence and credibility within their families and communities.